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Unclassified Summary of Public Positions on INF

The Vice President's arrival and activities in Bonn were covered extensively in the West European media. In the UK, the press focused on the growing controversy surrounding the Thatcher government's plans for an information campaign on INF.

UK

The British press covered the Vice President's arrival in West Germany, emphasizing the public aspects of the trip. The Guardian again editorialized that the problem on INF is not one of public relations but a growing lack of confidence in US leadership, claiming, "Mr. Bush is not coming (to Europe) essentially for meaningful discussions; he is coming to attract media coverage." The press also carried a weekend interview with Foreign Secretary Pym in which he said that INF plans could be changed or reversed over the five-year period of deployment if the Soviets are serious in arms control talks. Pym reiterated his view that "balanced and verifiable" disarmament is the only way to stop the arms race. The Daily Telegraph postulated that the effect of the Bush trip "could be blunted" by Senate criticism of Kenneth Adelman, and in an editorial assailed the Thatcher government's public information campaign on INF. Meanwhile, the London Press Association reported that British officials recently discussed a coordinated campaign on INF with their West German counterparts. The Thatcher government declined to comment on the story. (U)

West Germany

The press yesterday noted a government statement that Kohl is "exceptionally satisfied" with his talks with the Vice President and that they are in "total agreement." The moderate Die Welt noted that West Berlin is the "proper place...for Bush to explain US security to the Europeans." The left/center Frankfurter Rundschau quoted the Vice President as saying he would not interfere in the West German election campaign, but the newspaper went on to suggest that "Reagan's preference for Kohl" made this pledge impossible to honor. The pro-CDU paper Bonner Rundschau pointed out that the Bush trip reflects a "qualitative change in the Atlantic partnership." (U)

France

French media yesterday cited the Vice President's efforts to dispel rumors that he is carrying new US proposals on INF negotiations. The pro-Socialist daily Le Matin speculated that "it is up to (the Vice President) to decide if new compromises are urgent or opportune." Le Monde noted that the Vice President's "principal stop is clearly Bonn and not Paris," and that he has no mandate to negotiate. "He will raise his voice only if Reagan asks him to. He certainly would not like it because he hates polemics....He will patiently listen to his interlocutors and will try to smooth the angles." Figaro-Aurore's Moscow correspondent reported that Soviet leaders are justifiably angry about the Vice President's "propaganda tour" because it interferes with their aim of increasing "pacifist pressure" on Bonn. (U)

Italy

Reports and commentaries on the Vice President's trip dominated Italian media throughout the weekend. Among conservative papers, Il Tempo headlined that "Bush goes to Geneva with new proposals," and Il Giornale claimed that the Bush mission's "failure" to unite the Allies behind deployment could destroy NATO. Of the centrist papers, Corriere Della Sera opined that the trip's chief purpose is to "counteract Andropov's dynamic diplomatic offensive and to keep the Allies united." La Stampa (centrist) observed that "Bush has lobbed the ball back into the Soviet court," while the Socialist paper Avanti claimed that the Vice President came to Europe "without new proposals on the Euromissiles." (U)

USSR

Soviet media have not as yet acknowledged President Reagan's public proposal for a summit with General Secretary Andropov to sign an agreement banning all US and Soviet intermediate-range, land-based nuclear missiles. Coverage of the first day of the Vice President's trip was predictably negative; TASS asserted that rumors of a softened US stance at Geneva are intended as a deceptive way of ensuring INF deployments in Western Europe. (U)

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